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December 29, 1983

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Ms. Jill Cummings
6020 Cherry Street
Halifax, N.S.
B3H 2K3

Dear Ms. Cummings:

Thank you for your letter of November 27 addressed to Mr. MacEachen regarding East Timor. I have noted the points you put forward concerning the complex situation which exists in that region.

I believe Mr. MacEachen's previous letter covered many aspects of the Canadian Government's position. In light of your remarks, there are some additional points I would like to make.

During a period of several months prior to August 1983 there had been concerted efforts by the Indonesian government and the Governor of Timor to conclude some form of cessation in the fighting between Indonesian military forces and Fretilin guerrillas. An informal ceasefire was arranged but was broken when, in early August, a group of Indonesian soldiers were ambushed and killed by guerrillas. The response of the Indonesian government was to increase the number of their military personnel in Timor.

Indonesian expenditures in improving the economic well-being of the people of Timor have been considerable, and have been much higher than the level of infrastructure investment in many other parts of the country. It is estimated that since 1976 over US $178 million has been spent on schools, hospitals and roads in the province. This is a substantial expenditure, particularly in view of the relatively modest resources of the Indonesian government. As you may know the per capita income in Indonesia is only US $500 per year.

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As has been stated in earlier letters Canada does not condone the manner in which Timor became a province of Indonesia particularly as the fighting between Fretilin guerrilla forces and the Indonesian military resulted in civilian casualties and dislocation to the fragile subsistence life style of many of the Timorese people.

Thank you for writing again to express your concern.

Yours sincerely,

A.G. Vincent
Director
South and Southeast Asia Division